

Consumer·News

Federal Communications Commission • 1919 M Street • Washington, D.C. 20554

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It Pays To Be Phone Wise

Hang Up On High Public Phone Rates

Consumers placing calls away from home often do not know which telephone company they are using. Before you leave home contact your chosen long distance company and obtain instructions on how to place calls through that company from public telephones.



Operator Service Providers (OSPs) provide long distance service -- and in some cases local telephone services -- from pay telephones or telephones located in public places such as hotels, motels and hospitals. The OSP serving a public telephone generally will handle a call if "0" is dialed before dialing any other number.

You can identify the OSP providing service for a public telephone by following these easy steps:

STOP before making the call.

LOOK at the printed information on or near the telephone. The FCC's rules require each public telephone provider to post on or near each telephone -- in plain view of consumers -- the name, address, and toll-free telephone number of the OSP.

The information must include a written disclosure that the OSP's rates for operator assisted calls are available, that consumers have a right to obtain access to the interstate long distance carrier of their choice, and may call that carrier using that telephone.

LISTEN after you dial the number you are calling to determine which OSP is handling your call. The FCC's rules require each OSP to identify itself to the consumer at the beginning of the call and before the consumer incurs any charges.

Beginning July 1, 1998, most OSPs must also orally notify callers of their right to obtain rate quotations for interstate calls before the call is connected and billed. Consumers will be able to learn the total price of a telephone call -- including any surcharges -- by simply pressing a button, such as the pound key, or staying on the line.

The price disclosure requirement will give you the opportunity to hang up on high rates and to "dial around" the OSP by following your chosen long distance company's instructions for placing calls from public telephones.

Don't Let Your OSP Bill Surprise You

❑ Unless you use coins to pay for a call, the OSP will require you to charge the call to a calling card, call collect, or bill the call to a third party.

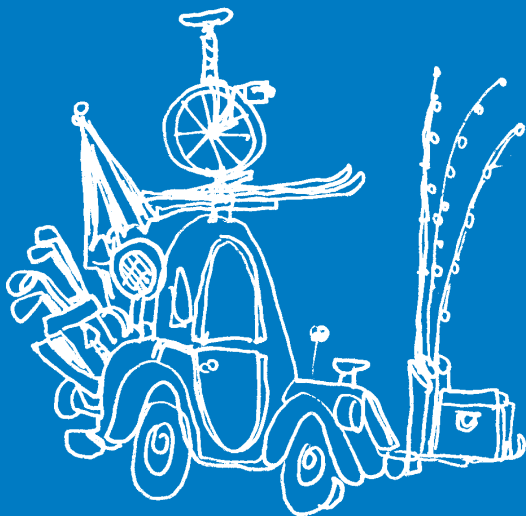
❑ The OSP most likely will be able to bill you for a call at its rates if you use a calling card that includes your entire telephone number as part of the calling card number.

❑ Remember

Calls handled by an OSP will be billed at the OSP's rates, not the rates of the company that issued the calling card -- unless the OSP issued the card.

No matter what type of calling card you use, the only way to be sure your call will be billed through your chosen long distance company is to follow that company's instructions for placing calls from public telephones.

Don't Let Your
Telephone Bill Spoil
Your Trip



Be Phone Wise It Pays To Know the Rules

The FCC has adopted rules to ensure that interstate OSP services are provided to consumers in a fair and reasonable manner.

In addition to the FCC consumer protection rules described on the first page of this brochure, the FCC has also adopted the following rules:

You have the right to place calls from a public telephone through the long distance company you want to use by dialing an access code -- such as an 800 number, a local number that begins with 950, or a seven-digit access number known as a 101-XXXX number. Federal law prohibits blocking of 800 or 950 access to long distance companies from public telephones.

OSP's are required to immediately connect emergency calls to the appropriate emergency service.

OSP's cannot bill for unanswered calls in areas where equal access (1+) service is available, nor can the OSP knowingly bill for unanswered calls where equal access is not available.

Sometimes an unanswered call will register as a billed call due to the equipment used by local telephone companies in areas where equal access is not available.

Beginning July 1, 1998, most consumers receiving collect calls from inmates in prisons, jails and other correctional or similar institutions will be able to obtain the price of the call by simply pressing a button or staying on the line.

OSP's providing operator services for inmate-only telephones will be required to orally notify the consumer to be billed for an inmate's collect call of his or her right to obtain rate quotations before the OSP connects and bills for an interstate collect call.

The consumer can then decide whether or not they want to accept the collect call. The consumer can also use the rate quotation information to decide whether or not they want to limit the length of the call.

Filing a Complaint With the FCC

You should first try to resolve your complaint with the company or companies providing the service or billing for the service. If you are unsuccessful in your attempts to resolve your complaint -- then you can file a complaint with the proper regulatory agency.

If your complaint involves calls placed from one location to another location within the same state (**intra-state calls**), you should address your complaint to the public utility regulatory commission for the state where the service was provided.

You can obtain the telephone number and address for your state regulatory agency from your local or state consumer offices or the government section of your telephone directory. The telephone numbers for the state regulatory agencies can also be found on the FCC's web site at http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/consumer_news/state_puc.html

You may file a complaint with the FCC if your complaint concerns problems you had with placing calls from one state to another state (**interstate calls**).

There is no special form to fill out to file a complaint with the FCC. You can simply send typed or legibly printed letter in your own words to:

Federal Communications Commission
Common Carrier Bureau
Consumer Complaints
Mail Stop 1600A2
Washington, DC 20554

Information You Must Include In Your Complaint Letter



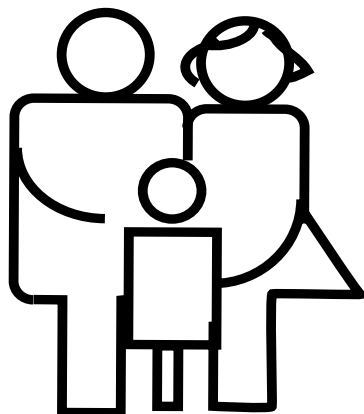
Your Name
Company Name (*where appropriate*)
Street Address or Post Office Box
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime telephone number
(including Area Code)

Be sure to include the following information:

- ✓ A brief description of the complaint.
- ✓ The name, address and telephone number for the hotel, motel, hospital or other entity where the public telephone was located.
- ✓ The number on the telephone and the telephone vendor (if identified on the telephone).
- ✓ The date or dates of the incidents involved with the complaint.
- ✓ The exact numbers you dialed if you were unsuccessful in your attempts to place the call through your telephone company of choice.
- ✓ The name of the OSP providing long distance service for the telephone you used.
- ✓ The names and addresses of all the companies involved with the complaint.
- ✓ The names and telephone numbers of the company employees you talked with in an effort to resolve the complaint, and the dates you spoke with them.
- ✓ The action requested, such as a credit or refund for disputed charges.
- ✓ Copies of the telephone bills listing the disputed charges. The disputed charges should be circled on the copies of the bills.
- ✓ Copies of correspondence received from the companies involved with the complaint and from state or federal agencies you contacted in an effort to resolve the complaint.
- ✓ Copies of other documents involved with the complaint.

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer Protection Branch
Common Carrier Bureau
Mail Stop 1600A2
Washington, DC 20554

This is in response to your contact with the
Federal Communications Commission



Thank you for your interest

It Pays To Be Phone Wise.
Hang Up On High Public Phone Rates.
(Operator Service Providers)
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